




# The Impact of a Psychoeducation Program on Turkish Students' Negative Attitudes Towards Refugee Peers


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## Abstract

About 26% of the Syrian population in Turkey is made up of school-age children. In the 2017–2018 academic year, 608,000 Syrian students enrolled in the education system, and 50% attended temporary education centers established for only Syrian students, while the other half attended public schools with their Turkish peers. One of the main factors that complicate the adaptation process of Syrian refugee students who have come to a different culture and have been placed in a foreign education system is the discriminatory attitudes from the locals' prejudices. Thus, in this study, a five-week psychoeducation program was developed and implemented by the researchers to help make Turkish students better acquainted with their refugee schoolmates, raise awareness of their prejudices, and also shed the negative attitudes to facilitate the adaptation of refugee students. At the end of the study, it was observed that the 5-week psychoeducation program effectively reduced Turkish students' prejudices towards their Syrian schoolmates and helped them develop positive attitudes towards them. It was also concluded that these positive attitudes continued within the time frame of the 6-week follow-up process.

**Keywords:** *refugee; psychoeducation; discrimination; children*

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## Introduction

Turkey has been subject to mass immigration recently due to increased instability in neighboring countries in the shape of terror events or civil war. The vast majority of these refugees are from Syria. According to the Directorate General of Migration Management of the Ministry of Interior, 3,540,648 Syrian refugees live in Turkey (2018).

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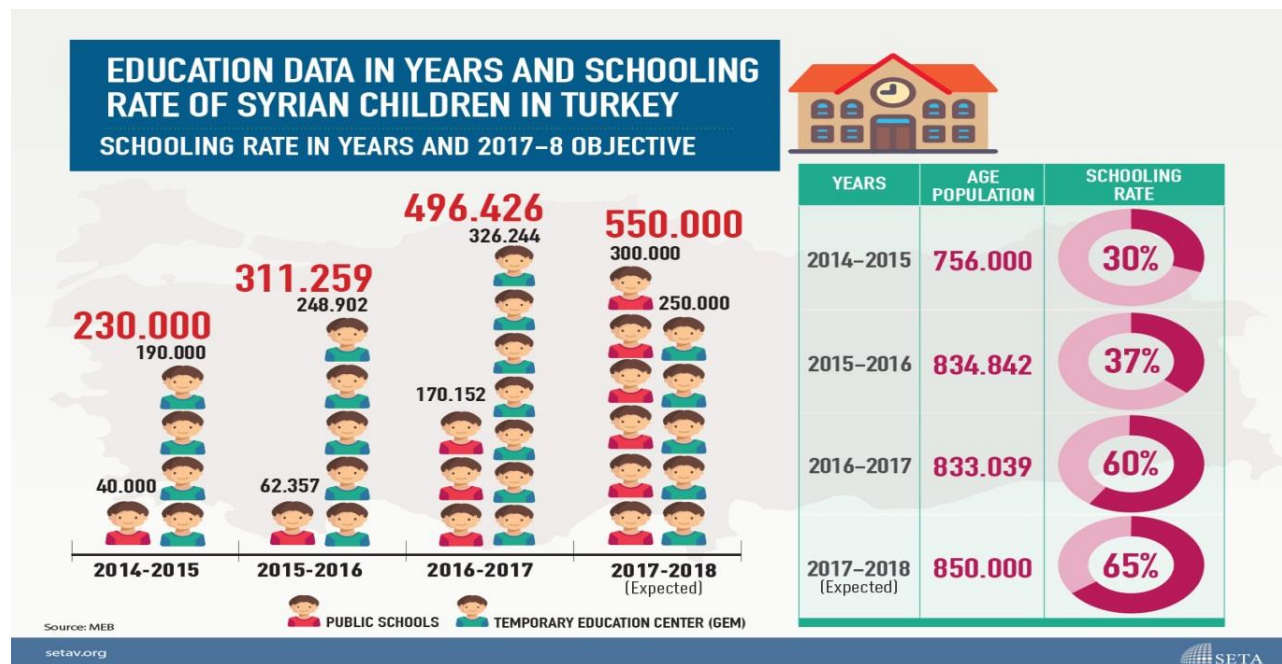
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The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2018) offers the following definition of a refugee:

Refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution, or other events that threaten national security and require international protection and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country.

One of the most critical points emphasized in this definition is that being a refugee is not a choice but a necessity. Even in the case of immigration, where people willingly leave their countries, many problems can arise, such as economic, legal, unemployment, and accommodation issues. While different fields such as economics, anthropology, and law are concerned with these issues, psychology mostly focuses on the adaptation problems of refugees and the resulting stress and identity-formation process (Chuang, 2011).

Due to various problems faced in one's homeland, this forced displacement brings many issues. The foremost problems are housing, unemployment, health, and education. About 26% of Turkey's Syrian population comprises school-age children (Disaster and Emergency Management Authority, 2017). Even though models such as temporary education centers have been put in place to address these children's educational requirements, the idea that these students should share public schools with Turkish students came to the fore in social integration. Moreover, the Turkish Ministry of Education (MNE) plans to abolish the temporary education centers to help Syrian children refugees adapt to the Turkish education system (MNE, 2018). This transformation becomes evident when the annual figures for Syrian children concerning their education and their schooling rates are examined (Seta Foundation, 2018).



**Figure 1:** *Schooling Rates of Syrian Children Refugees in Turkey by Year.*

Only 30% of Syrian children refugees in Turkey attended school in 2014, as opposed to 65% in the academic year 2017–2018. At the same time, the number of Syrian children who attended regular public schools exceeded that of children who go to temporary education centers. According to an announcement by the Ministry of National Education for the 2017–2018 academic year, 608,000 Syrian students were integrated

into the Turkish education system. Approximately half of these students receive education in public schools alongside their Turkish peers (MNE, 2018).

The placement of Syrian refugees in the same schools as their Turkish peers has brought some adjustment problems. Language problems, behavior problems, problems concerning the cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the schools, problems concerning the cooperation between families and the schools, and problems in the teaching process were raised as the main areas of concern by teachers and administrators of schools with refugee students (Saritaş et al., 2016). While refugee students see language barriers, family issues, and economic problems as their primary sources of concern, some refugee students also stated that they were subjected to discrimination by their teachers or schoolmates from time to time (Börü & Boyacı, 2016).

There may be numerous reasons behind the adaptation problems of Syrian refugee students who have come to a different culture and have been placed in an education system that is foreign to them. While the phenomenon of migration is an essential source of stress for all, forced migration can be a traumatic experience, as in the case of Syrian refugee children (Aydın, 2017; Çeri and Özer, 2018). For example, according to a study on juvenile offenders in Diyarbakır, 90% of the children committing criminal acts had to leave their countries due to terror (Erkan and Erdoğan, 2006). While forced migration causes problems of adaptation in children even within their own country (Polat, 2007), the people who suffer the most due to migration from one country to another, due to war, are mostly children. In a study conducted by Çeri and Özer (2018) with families and their children living in refugee camps in Turkey, 88.7% of the children stated that they had lost a relative, 58% stated that they had heard a gunshot or an explosion, and 39.6% stated that they had seen a dead or injured person. Accordingly, 26.4% of children in the same group experience emotional problems, 22.6% have problems with their peers, 18.8% show hyperactivity symptoms, and 15% have behavioral problems (Çeri & Özer, 2018). The main problems that children face, especially after immigration, are that they cannot get enough expert support for the social, educational, and psychological problems arising from migration into a country with a foreign language and culture (Colins, 2015; Demirbaş & Bekaroğlu, 2013).

The process of migration and its aftermath can be a challenging and traumatic experience for the displaced refugees and the local people of the country into which the refugees migrate (Solak & Özpolat, 2018). As a result of this process, one of the main problems that Syrian children experience in the school environment is discriminatory practices (Tüzün, 2017). In fact, this attitude is not unexpected. Berry (1997) states that the adaptation of individuals to a new culture is a process that he argues consists of five stages: contact, perception, evaluation of experiences, making meaning out of experiences, and using different coping methods—stress reactions and adaptation. The adaptation process, consisting of different stages, is influenced by factors such as the duration of contact with the new culture, social support, coping skills, acculturation attitudes, and perceived discrimination. As in other countries affected by immigration, Turkey has also signed international treaties, such as the Geneva Convention, the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Family Members, No. 4662. Besides, it has brought into effect national regulations such as Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection and Temporary Protection Regulation No. 2014/6883 to prevent immigrants from seeking refuge in Turkey without discrimination. The objective of all these legal arrangements is to guarantee the fundamental rights of non-Turkish citizens who have come to this country willingly or due to reasons beyond their control, such as employment, housing, education, and health, and to prevent them from being discriminated against in these matters (The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Human Rights Inquiry Commission, 2018).

Although children have some prejudices against people from different ethnic backgrounds (Winkler, 2009), it can be argued that the negative beliefs and attitudes of Turkish students against immigrants emanate from

newspapers, magazines, TVs, and online newspapers (Doğanay & Çoban Keneş, 2016), their parents (Çevik & İlhan, 2013), or other members of society (Senemoğlu, 1997). For example in his research conducted with 18 public school managers in two cities in the Southeastern Anatolia Region, where so many Syrian refugees live, Sakız (2016) found that school managers have negative attitudes towards refugee students, not wishing to have them at their school and preferring that they continue their education at separate schools. The prolongation of the chaotic situation in Syria after the civil war and the ensuing period has led to an increase in negative attitudes towards Syrian refugees, who had initially been welcomed as guests with high tolerance. Research suggests that the media contributes to the increasingly negative attitudes of Turkish society towards Syrian refugees (Bayram, 2018; Efe, 2015).

Therefore, efforts should be made to reduce schoolmates' prejudices to facilitate the adaptation of Syrian students to Turkish culture. Breaking down the prejudices may have a positive impact on students' behavior towards Syrian students. These attitudes and behaviors can facilitate and accelerate the adaptation process of Syrian students. According to Berry (1997), the locals' attitude is critical in cultural adaptation. In literature, there is no study on changing negative attitudes towards refugees. However, it was observed that psychoeducational practices decrease the negative attitudes towards individuals with certain mental disorders, such as schizophrenia (Demir Gökmen & Okanlı, 2017; Gutiérrez-Maldonado et al., 2009) and be effective in improving the positive attitudes towards the disabled individuals (Sezer, 2012). Hence, the present study intended to enable Turkish students, who share public schools with refugee students in cities with a massive immigrant population, to know their refugee schoolmates better, become aware of their prejudices, and shed their negative attitudes. The aim of doing so was to strengthen communication between Turkish students and Syrian refugee students and facilitate the adaptation process of refugee students. Answers were sought to the following study questions following the purpose of this study:

1. Is the psychoeducation program effective in reducing the negative attitudes of Turkish students towards refugee peers?
2. Does this effect continue after the 6-week-long follow-up process?

## Methodology

A quasi-experimental study was conducted, aimed at reducing the negative attitudes of children attending secondary schools towards their Syrian schoolmates with refugee status. In the study, we used pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test measurements, as well as a mixed sample with an experimental group and a control group. Within this pattern, the first factor demonstrated independent process groups (experiment and control), and the second factor illustrated the repeated measurements (pre-test, post-test, follow-up test) relating to the dependent variable under different circumstances (see Table 1). The research was conducted in Gaziantep, Turkey, in the fall semester of the 2017–2018 academic year.

**Table 1:** *Study Design*

Groups	Pre-test	Process	Post-test	Follow-up test
Experimental	ATRSC	Psychoeducation Program	ATRSC	ATRSC
Control	ATRSC	-	ATRSC	ATRSC

ATRSC: Attitude Towards Refugee Students Scale

Following the study design, the Attitude Towards Refugee Students Scale (ATRSC) was applied to the experimental and control groups before implementation in the experimental group. One week after applying the measurement tool, a 5-week psycho-training program, developed by the researchers to reduce prejudices

towards refugees, was conducted with the experimental group. No studies were conducted with the control group during this process. One week after the end of the program's implementation, the same measurement tool was re-applied to the experimental and control groups. A follow-up measurement was performed six weeks after the final test.

### Creating Experimental and Control Groups

Before starting the research, the school administration and the participating students' families were informed of the research. After obtaining permission from the school administration and families, the school's psychological counselor presented the measurement tools to the students face-to-face using the paper-pencil method. ATRSC was applied to 331 Turkish students in total. The school where the practice is conducted is a public secondary school where Turkish and Syrian students study in the same classes. The mean ( $M = 52.33$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 12.40$ ) of the scores that students obtained from the ATRSC were calculated in forming the experimental and control groups. Interviews were conducted with 62 secondary school students who scored above a standard deviation from the mean, i.e., those considered to have negative attitudes towards their refugee peers. Following these interviews, 11 students were assigned to the experimental group, and 10 were assigned to the control group in the aftermath of a selection process whereby voluntary students, whose parents' consent was sought and who were able to come together on a particular day and time, were enrolled based on their weekly course schedules and school-bus timetables. The mean and standard deviation of the scores of the experimental and control groups obtained from the ATRSC are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** *The Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation of the Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups Obtained From the ATRSC*

Groups	n		$\bar{x}$			sd		
	Female	Male	Pre-test	Post-test	Follow-up test	Pre-test	Post-test	Follow-up test
Experimental	5	6	68,84	55,18	47,73	2,61	7,78	11,99
Control	3	7	67,90	67,40	64,18	2,28	2,59	4,93

The mean post-test and follow-up test scores obtained by the experimental group from the ATRSC decreased, and, while there were no significant changes to the post-test mean score of the control group, there was a decrease in the follow-up measurement, as determined by a Mann-Whitney test.

### Data Collection Tool

In order to measure the dependent variable, we used the ATRSC, which measures local students' attitudes towards refugee students in their schools, in this study.

#### Attitude Towards Refugee Students Scale:

ATRSC was developed by Kılcan et al. (2017) to determine the attitudes of Turkish students towards students with refugee status. Consisting of 24 items, the ATRSC is a three-point Likert-type scale with the options "I Agree," "Not Sure," and "I do not Agree." The highest and lowest possible scores obtained from the scale are 72 and 24, respectively. A high score indicates increased hostile attitudes towards refugees. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, calculated to determine the reliability of the scale, was .92. The values obtained indicate that ATRSC is a valid and reliable instrument (Can, 2014).

#### The Applied Psychoeducation Program:

In this study, a 5-week-long psychoeducation program developed by the researchers was used to change



Turkish students' negative attitudes towards refugee students who share their school environment and empathize with the refugee students by becoming aware of their prejudices. The program objectives can be outlined as follows:

- Week I Recognition of false information and beliefs about refugees.** In the first sessions, the participants are asked what they know about the refugees and to write this information in the first column of the given paper. Then, they watch a short video about being a refugee. They are asked to note what they learn from the video about refugees in the second column of the paper. Later, the differences between the previous and new learnings are discussed, and the session ends.
- Week II Recognizing that being a refugee is not a choice but a necessity.** The recognition that the refugees are regular people who have a home, family, neighbors, and relatives just like us is emphasized. The reasons behind being a refugee are discussed. The participants are asked about why those people leave their homeland and come to a new country they do not know anything about it. They are asked to paint the pictures of possible events that their refugee peers might experience in their homeland. The paintings are shown to the group, and it is emphasized that being a refugee is not a choice but a necessity.
- Week III Recognizing the problems of being a refugee and how these problems affect children.** In order for the participants to realize what problems the refugees may face, different problems are written on balloons of different colors, and the participants are asked to catch the balloons and share them with the group. Then a questionnaire is given to the participants in a language they do not know. The survey includes explanations starting from necessary information such as name, surname, and age to more complicated answers. Participants are given 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire. At the end of the period, they talk about the feelings of the participants. The leader emphasizes that not understanding the spoken and written language is just one of the challenges that refugees face.
- Week IV Recognizing the feelings and thoughts of refugee children and empathizing with them.** The scenario called "I Am a Refugee" is read so that the participants can empathize with their refugee peers and understand them better. According to this scenario, when you return home from school, you learn that the family is preparing to go, and you have to pack your stuff immediately. The objects you can take with you are limited; for example, you cannot take your pet. There is not enough space for all family members in the car. Therefore, your father and one of your brothers will come later. You do not know where to go and how long to stay. It is getting dark; you become hungry and sleepy. You already miss your home and bed. Moreover, you do not know most of the people traveling with you. The participants are asked to imagine that they are experiencing this scenario and write down their feelings and thoughts. The writings are shared with the group. The leader must bring the participants back to the safe place by reminding them how lucky they are and emphasizing that this is just a script. At the end of the session, homework is given to discuss what they learned with their refugee peers in this psychoeducation.
- Week V Bringing about behavioral change in students by helping them transform their newly acquired awareness of refugees into real actions, becoming aware of the importance of communication and recognizing its beneficial effects.** The participants' opinions about the homework given last week are discussed. Group interaction is initiated with questions such as how they felt when communicating with their refugee peers and how they reacted. The positive effects of communicating both on themselves and their refugee peers are emphasized. What is learned so far is summarized. The positive contribution of the participants to the process is emphasized, and psychoeducation ends.

## Data Analysis

The distribution of the scores in the experimental and control groups obtained from a pre-test application of the ATRSC was examined. As the number of samples was below 30, the values obtained from the Shapiro-Wilk test met the normal distribution conditions for the pre-test mean scores of the experimental group ( $p > .05$ ), whereas the values obtained from the pre-test mean scores of the control group did not meet the normal distribution conditions ( $p < .05$ ). Moreover, nonparametric tests are recommended if the number of samples is less than 30 in the analysis of the data obtained from the research (Corder & Foreman, 2014). Based on these considerations, we decided to use nonparametric tests in the analysis of the data. Accordingly, the mean scores obtained by the experimental and control groups from the ATRSC were compared in the first instance. The Mann-Whitney U test was performed to determine whether the pre-test scores obtained by the two groups were equivalent to one another, and the obtained values are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Mann-Whitney U Test Results for the Pre-Test Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

	Groups	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
ATRSC	Experimental	11	12,05	132,50	43,50	.413
	Control	10	9,85	98,50		

Table 3 shows no significant differences between the pre-test score averages obtained in the experimental and control groups from the ATRSC ( $U = 43.50$ ,  $p > .05$ ). This value can be interpreted as showing that the experimental and control groups share similar attitudes towards refugee students as measured by the ATRSC. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to determine whether the mean scores of the experimental and control groups obtained from the pre-test, post-test, and post-test follow-up tests differed significantly after obtaining equal scores before the implementation of the program. Besides, the extent of the impact concerning intra-group changes was calculated and demonstrated in the tables. Data were analyzed using the SPSS 20.0 package program, and the significance level of .05 was taken as a basis in determining the significance level of the obtained values.

## Results

This study aimed to reduce Turkish students' negative attitudes towards their Syrian schoolmates with whom they share their schools and to strengthen communication between refugee students and Turkish students. For this purpose, a 5-week-long psychoeducation program was undertaken with students attending a state secondary school in Gaziantep who were determined, using the Attitudes Towards Refugee Students Scale, to harbor negative attitudes towards refugees. After the experiment's implementation, the Mann-Whitney U test was performed to compare the post-test and follow-up test mean scores that the experimental and control groups obtained from the ATRSC, and the obtained values are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Mann-Whitney U Test Results for the Post-Test and Follow-Up Test Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

	Groups	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
ATRSC (pre-test)	Experimental	11	6,36	70,00	4,00	.000
	Control	10	16,10	161,00		
ATRSC (follow-up)	Experimental	11	6,64	73,00	7,00	.001

There was a significant difference between both the mean post-test scores ( $U = 4.00, p < .05$ ) and the mean follow-up test ( $U = 7.00, p < .05$ ) scores, which the experimental and control groups obtained from the ATRSC. The changes to the pre-test and post-test follow-up scores of both groups were compared using the Friedman Test to examine the post-implementation changes in the experimental and control groups with equivalent mean scores before implementing the program, and the values obtained were shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Friedman Test Results About the Pre-Test, Post-Test, and Follow-Up Test Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups Obtained From the ATRSC

Group	Scores	n	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	sd	p
Experimental Group	Pre-test	11	3,00			
	Post-test	11	1,82	18,727	2	0,000*
	Follow-up	11	1,18			
Control Group	Pre-test	10	2,50			
	Post-test	10	2,25	12,500	2	0,002*
	Follow-up	10	1,25			

\* $p < 0.05$

Changes in the pre-test and post-test follow-up scores of the students from both the experimental and control groups were significant ( $p < .05$ ). Changes to the pre-test, post-test, and post-test-follow-up test mean scores of the experimental and control groups were examined using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test to determine the source of the change. The values obtained are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test in Relation to the Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

	Ön-test*Son-test	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	p	r
Experimental Group	Negative Ranks	11	6.00	66.00			
	Positive Ranks	0	0.00	0.00	-2,93	.003	.88
	Ties	0					
Control Group	Negative Ranks	4	3,13	12,50			
	Positive Ranks	1	2,50	2,50	-1,41	.157	.45
	Ties	5					

Table 6 shows a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores that students in the experimental group obtained from the ATRSC, while no significant difference was found between the mean scores of the control group. For both groups' mean, there was a statistically significant decrease in the students' negative attitudes in the experimental group towards refugee students. At the same time, there were no significant differences in the students' negative attitudes in the control group towards their refugee peers. The pre-test and post-test changes to the students' scores in the experimental group had a significant impact, while the pre-test and post-test changes to the students' scores in the control group had a moderate impact (Kilmen, 2015). We also examined whether this significant difference in the experimental group continued into the 6-week follow-up measurement and whether the current situation in the control group continued



during the follow-up measurement using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. The values obtained are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test in Relation to the Post-Test-Follow-Up-Test Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

	Post-test*Follow-up test	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	p	r
Experimental Group	Negative Ranks	2	2,00	4,00	-2,59	.010	.78
	Positive Ranks	9	6,89	62,00			
	Ties	0					
Control Group	Negative Ranks	0	0,00	0,00	-2,53	.012	.80
	Positive Ranks	8	4,50	36,00			
	Ties	2					

The changes to the post-test follow-up scores of students from both the experimental and control groups were significant. The arithmetic averages of the groups can be interpreted as indicating that the students' negative attitudes in both the experimental and control groups towards refugee students have decreased. When compared in terms of the impact size, it can be argued that the change in the experimental and control groups has a significant impact.

## Conclusion and Discussion

After the study, it was observed that the 5-week psychoeducation program developed by the researchers was effective in reducing the prejudices of Turkish students towards their Syrian schoolmates and in helping them develop positive attitudes towards their Syrian schoolmates. The positive attitudes of the Turkish students towards refugee students continued in the 6-week follow-up measurement process. Based on these findings, we argue that a psychoeducation program seeking to make Turkish students understand refugees better and to strengthen the communication between the two groups supported the process for the breaking down of prejudices and for Turkish students developing positive attitudes. Although we did not identify any studies in the literature referencing a psychoeducational program for the locals to facilitate the adaptation process of refugee children, it has been noted that individual and group interventions for refugee children and their families also facilitate the adaptation process of refugees and have a positive impact on tackling the psychological problems that arise during the period of forced migration (Murray et al., 2010) and afterward.

However, it is also notable that the post-test follow-up test changes were meaningful even though there were no significant differences between pre-test and post-test concerning the negative attitudes of the students in the control group. In other words, it can be argued that the negative attitudes of students in the control group, who have not attended any psychoeducational programs, towards their refugee peers have also shown a decrease. It appeared that the time spent with refugee peers within a time frame of 11 weeks from the beginning of the program to the follow-up measurement is an essential factor in the Turkish students' change of attitude. Also, the attitudes of teachers and the practices of the psychological counseling unit of the school where the program was applied within the context of their annual program are considered to be effective in reducing the prejudices of Turkish students and increasing the interaction between both groups. In particular, basic principles such as unconditional acceptance, respect, and empathy that guide psychological counselors' practices appeared to have accelerated this process of acculturation.

Although the experimental group developed more positive attitudes about the pre-test and post-test score averages and there were no meaningful changes to the attitudes of students in the control group, this result is supported by the fact that the change of attitudes in both the experimental and the control group was

meaningful for the changes in the post-test follow-up test scores. While personal characteristics such as age and gender are effective in initiating the process of acculturation of individuals, which has five stages and covers a specific time, factors such as the duration of contact with the new culture, social support, coping skills, acculturation attitudes, and perceived discrimination are useful in facilitating the adaptation process and making it a success (Berry, 1997). In this context, the decision by the Ministry of Education to place Syrian refugees of school-age in public schools instead of temporary education centers (Ministry of National Education, 2016) was appropriate. More time spent by Turkish and refugee students promoted acculturation, facilitating the process of people from different cultures understanding and acknowledging each other. Based on the post-test and follow-up test score means of the experimental and control groups, the experimental group's mean score is lower than that of the control group, and the gap between the groups widens in favor of the experimental group during the follow-up measurement (Table 2). These values show that the psychoeducation program developed by the researchers is much more effective in reducing the prejudices against refugees and facilitating the mutual adaptation process compared to the control group in terms of both time and quality.

The fact that refugee children go to school together with Turkish children can be interpreted as indicating that Syrian children have learned Turkish. Some of these students, who go to secondary school, have learned Turkish during the time they have spent at the temporary education centers while some of them, being of Turkish origin, already have a smattering of Turkish, allowing them to go to the same public schools as their Turkish peers, even if they cannot read or write. The fact that refugee children know Turkish may have made it easier for them to communicate with their Turkish peers and accelerated the acculturation process. For example, in the context of homework given within the program's scope, the students stated that their refugee peers' Turkish skills made it easier for them to communicate, made them feel comfortable, and encouraged them to invite them to play. Saygın and Hasta (2018) examined psychological studies on migration and showed the variables affecting refugees' adaptation process. Their results demonstrated that refugees' integration into the education system of the country into which they migrate makes it easier for them to learn the language while also accelerating the adaptation process.

As a result, we argue that Turkish and refugee students being together in the same schools and the same classes contributed to a change in the quality of the friendly interactions due to children from different cultures better understanding each other, having fewer prejudices, and gaining the opportunity to spend more time together. In this regard, it can contribute to facilitating and accelerating the adaptation process, when school counselors, teachers, and school administrations help Turkish and Syrian students interact more with one another through various extracurricular social activities and also when they offer encouragement to students and their parents.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

This research was carried out at a secondary school in Gaziantep, Turkey, in a neighborhood predominantly inhabited by families with a medium-income level. All of the refugee students in the school are from Syria. The fact that refugee students have the same religious values as Turkish students and that some refugee students are ethnically Turkish despite being Syrian citizens may have contributed to mutual acculturation. Therefore, the results of this study may be limited to groups with similar cultural structures. Besides, the results of the study are limited to the data from the Scale for Attitudes towards Refugee Students.

Similar psychoeducation programs for refugee students and their families can be developed and implemented to facilitate and accelerate the adaptation process of refugee children. In a similar program for Turkish students, sessions can be added for the families of Turkish students. Within the framework of counseling services at schools, in-class activities can be included to help reduce the prejudices towards refugees and facilitate interaction between both sides.

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